

Teaming with wildlife

Guardians of the Bay of Islands Inc. Annual Report

Ngā Kaiawhi o Ngā Kaitiaki o Ipipiri

For the year ended 30 June 2025



2050 Whāinga 2050 Goal *The ancient dawn chorus is restored*

Mihi

Te Maunga ko Rākaumangamanga o te whare tapu
o Ngāpuhi

Te Moana ko Ipipiri o Tokerau

Te Hapū ko Ngāti Kuta me Patukeha

Te Iwi ko Ngāpuhi

Te marae ko Te Rawhiti

*The sacred mountain is Rākaumangamanga of the sacred
house of Ngāpuhi*

The ocean is Ipipiri o Tokerau

The sub tribes are Ngāti Kuta and Patukeha

The tribe is Ngāpuhi

The marae is Te Rawhiti

Tō mātou moemoeā *Our vision*

The islands of Ipipiri are an archipelago of sanctuaries, alive
with the dawn chorus, where both people and Aotearoa
New Zealand's unique wildlife prosper in harmony.

What we do:



Pest Control & Biosecurity
Protecting the wildlife safe haven
by stopping non-native predators
and weeds from getting to the
pest-free islands.



Forest Regeneration
Restoring native habitat so
that the islands flourish.



Restoring Taonga Wildlife
Returning vulnerable native wildlife.



Inspiring Learning
Providing future generations of
kiwis with inspiring learning.

Above: Planting day, Urupukapuka Bay, Urupukapuka, June 2025.
On the cover: Celebrating 10 years since the release of Pōpokotea |
Whitehead on Motuarohia, Moturua and Urupukapuka.

Pānui mai i ngā Heamana *Message from the Chair*

Kia ora e te whānau,

The past year saw us grow tremendously as a team, I feel we have all been revitalised and re-energised. We all have different strengths, and when brought together as a unit we are so strong.

Able led by our General Manager Laura and our financial gurus of Andy, Mary and Carola, we have been able to steer the project forward. This year has held new beginnings, as well as space for reflecting on our journey so far, and how we can continue to build on our strengths and improve on what we do. As Guardians we are all passionate about the project and working in partnership.

The strength of the Project Island Song partnership, between the Guardians of the Bay of Islands, hapū and the Department of Conservation was reflected at the Northern Regional Council Environmental Awards – Whakamānawa ā Taiao. This year was the first time the project had been nominated and successfully came away with two awards.

Firstly, as winners of the “Environmental Action to Protect Native Life” category.

The judges shared their thoughts:
“This project has had a clear and lasting impact, with 15 years of pest-free status and 40,000 native trees planted. Their long-term commitment to restoring biodiversity in Pewhairangi Bay of Islands is remarkable. The group’s mahi supports native species by tackling pests, controlling weeds, and working to return lost wildlife. They collaborate with hapū, schools, families, individuals, and businesses, creating strong community partnerships. Their work with small, isolated schools is especially inspiring. With great measurable outcomes, this group is making a real difference for native life.”

The project was also Highly Commended for the Kiwi Coast Special award given to “recognise our proven commitment to restoring the health of our local forests and wildlife, including kiwi.”

Project Island Song intentionally started out quietly, without seeking too much publicity, as there were significant doubts over whether it was actually feasible to create and maintain pest-free sanctuaries on islands that were so close to the mainland, and so well-visited by humans. Having successfully developed and proven an approach for doing just that over the past 15 years, we are delighted that it has now received this recognition.

Of course, none of this could have been achieved without the thousands of volunteers, members, and supporters that have contributed over the past two decades, and the many who continue to do so.

Kirstie MacDiarmid, our Volunteer & Education Lead/Coordinator has been instrumental in engaging with people and organisations over the past year – from weeding, to public awareness, working with youth, and organising the Floating Classrooms – the list goes on.

Kirstie, alongside Kevin Philpott, brought in the use of the Weedmanager app for capturing weed data across the islands, which we believe will transform our weeding efforts going forward.

Kirstie has decided to move on from the role to travel, but we welcome Abby O'Neill to the team and look forward to her bringing her enthusiasm and skills to the project.

This year we welcomed two new part-time skippers to the team – Grace Murphy and Anton Tennet. We also acknowledge Tammy Jameson who has continued skippering for us during the winter season. Our skippers ensure our



William Fuller, Arana Rewha, Binnie O'Neill and Laura Meyer collecting the 'Environmental Action to Protect Native Life' award.

volunteers, conservation dogs and pest surveillance team can get out to the islands to complete the vital mahi of protecting the islands.

The major undertaking for our boat this year was passing our first Maritime Audit. Taking on the role of Responsible Person for the vessel, Tracey Taylor put a lot of work into this, ensuring everything was ship shape. Thank you Tracey for getting it across the line!

I would like to acknowledge Shelley Arlidge for taking on the writing and development of the Draft Ecological Restoration Plan. This had been stalled over several years but with Shelley’s passion to move the plan forward we’re now in a position to look and strategically plan ahead for future goals. You can read more about the plan and future actions on p8.

The team we have steering this project are dedicated and enthusiastic – I look forward to working with them all again this year. Thank you: Andrea, Barb, Binnie, Mary, Maryanne, Rana, Sarah, Shelley and Laura M.

They say “it takes a village to raise a child”. This is certainly the case with our “child” - Project Island Song. We are fortunate to have a large community of people that continues to care for, provide for, and believe in the Project and a positive future for the islands of Ipipiri.

Long may it continue!



William Fuller
Chairperson
Guardians of the Bay of Islands Inc.

Karere mai i te Kaiwhakahaere Matua *Message from the GM*



Tieke | North Island saddleback on Moturua.

Kia ora koutou katoa,

At the end of my first full year as General Manager, I am pleased to present the Annual Report for the Guardians of the Bay of Islands for the year ending 30 June 2025.

This past year has been one of both challenges and growth. Amidst an evolving landscape, we remained focused on our core priorities – keeping the islands pest-free, volunteering and education. I'm proud to report that our team has once again risen to the occasion, delivering strong operational performance and laying the foundation for continued progress.

Key achievements:

- **Biosecurity:** Not only have we had the consistency of monthly rodent conservation dog checks, but we have also begun monthly surveillance checks of hardware (traps and tracking tunnels) on the islands. This increase in surveillance has enabled prompt and successful responses to two incursions this year, in which a rat and a stoat were detected dead in traps.
- **Species:** 2025 has seen us celebrate 10 years of both tieke and pōpokotea being on the islands. Thanks to continued efforts by all those involved, these populations are regularly seen by those visiting the islands.
- **Draft Ecological Restoration Plan:** Shelley Arlidge has been working on a draft Ecological Restoration Plan for the islands with the support of mana whenua, Dave Towns and many others who, with their skills and knowledge, are enabling the plan to develop and look at the future of Ipipiri.
- **Funding:** While results of our grant funding programme this year have been a mixed bag, with noticeably increased competition for funds, our community fundraising campaigns have been successful, in particular our annual calendar sales, the 12ks of Christmas challenge, and our second raffle. Thank you to everyone who supported these campaigns.
- **Weeding:** This year Kirstie MacDiarmid our Education and Volunteer Lead Coordinator, along with Kevin Philpott one of our regular weeding volunteers, have trialled and tested an app to enable us to capture the locations of weeds and record information to enable ease of planning and a more productive day for our weedbusters on the islands.

- **Planting:** Once again, we thank Tom Lindesay for his commitment to increasing the habitat on the islands. This year, after only one cancellation due to weather, a wonderful team of volunteers headed out to Urupukapuka Bay to help plant another 575 plants.
- **Education:** This year we had an increase in education collaboration. We've continued working with the R. Tucker Thompson Youth Voyages, as well as NorthTec, Heritage New Zealand through Pompallier Mission and many others. Delivering programmes both on and off the islands increases conservation knowledge and skills for students around Northland.

These achievements are a testament to the dedication of our people, the loyalty of our volunteers and supporters, and the trust of our partners. I am deeply grateful for the collective efforts that brought us here.

Looking ahead, we are entering the next financial year with a renewed sense of purpose and a clear strategy. Our focus will be on:

- Continuing our commitment to biosecurity and keeping the islands pest-free
- Actioning outcomes from the Ecological Restoration Plan, when completed
- Ensuring we remain a viable enterprise within a challenging funding environment

I would like to acknowledge and thank our contractors, mana whenua, Guardians committee, volunteers, landowners, partners, members, donors, funders, and to everyone we have engaged with and worked alongside through this year. I thank you for your continued support.

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini, success is not that of one, but the strength of many.

Together, we can continue to achieve great things for Ipipiri.

Ngā mihi nui,



Laura Rumsey
General Manager,
Guardians of the Bay of Islands Inc.

Ecological Restoration Plan

After significant work over nearly ten years, the Ipipiri Ecological Restoration Plan is finally nearing completion, thanks to Shelley Arlidge's work over the past year. The plan outlines a 25-year roadmap for ecological restoration across the Ipipiri islands, building on over 15 years of conservation success, including the removal of invasive predators in 2009 and the reintroduction of native species. The draft plan is already helping guide goals for the coming financial year.

The plan also aligns with ongoing biodiversity and predator control work on the adjacent mainland, while focusing on restoring ecosystems that are underrepresented elsewhere. The area holds deep cultural significance for Ngāpuhi and other Polynesian groups, with a unique whakapapa, and played a major role in New Zealand's early colonial history – from European exploration to the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Historical records, oral histories, and archaeology show how the islands' biodiversity was severely degraded by the mid-20th century. Native forests were largely lost, soils compacted by livestock, and most native vertebrates and large invertebrates disappeared, worsened by the presence of multiple invasive rat species and stoats.



Since pest eradication, native species have begun to recover, and successful reintroductions of birds, insects, reptiles, and plants have taken place. However, the plan identifies further priorities for restoration to return the islands to a healthier ecological state.

This is a time to acknowledge all those who have and continue to be part of the development of the plan. Its development has come from the skills and knowledge of many of the local community, including Te Rawhiti hapū Ngāti Kuta and Patukeha, and the expertise of Professor David Towns, a leading figure in island conservation. Involved since the original pest eradication efforts in 2009, David brought decades of research and experience as the author of over 150 scientific publications. Now retired, he contributed significantly to the plan, drawing from his lifetime of conservation work.

While the draft plan will be completed this coming year, the goal is for this to be a living document that adapts to changing environments, where actions and achievements continue to support the biodiversity and ecosystems of these islands. Our ongoing mahi will continue to add more data, skills and knowledge for future kaitiaki.

"A living document that adapts to changing environments."

Above: Ecological Restoration Plan hui, Te Rawhiti marae, January 2025.



Northland green gecko, *Naultinus grayii*.

Tō mātou tau ki muri Our year in review



7



Species
monitoring trips

775



Trees planted

10



Floating
Classrooms

28



Other education
activities

2331



Volunteer
hours gifted

16



Pest-free
years

311



Volunteers

16



Business Members

15



Weeding trips

51



Days of dog checks,
including rodent,
skink, cat, ant
and mustelid

11



Days of island
hardware
surveillance



You can protect the islands and their
wildlife from invasive predators by
making a donation.

Either scan the QR code or visit our
website projectislandsong.co.nz/donate

Ā tātou pūtea

Our finances

While the FY24/25 financial environment proved to be tight due to increased competition for grant funding, the year-end total funds received were slightly ahead of budget expectation of \$415,714.

We continued to receive grant funding to support delivery of pest-free management and educational programmes from established funders including Foundation North, NZ Lottery Grants Board (Community and Environment & Heritage), COGS, Pub Charity, WWF New Zealand, and Joyce Fisher Charitable Trust. Receipt of the final installment from Department of Conservation for the development of an Ecological Restoration Plan marks the significant progress made towards completing this core strategic document. Another successful raffle boosted revenue and donations and calendar sales have now been added to merchandising sales.

With the adjustment to timing of grants from Joyce Fisher and Foundation North, all but one of the grants funding brought forward from FY23/24 was spent in delivery of education, volunteer, pest management, biosecurity, and ecological restoration. A total of \$67,196 is to be carried over into FY25/26 to continue delivery of the educational, volunteering, and pest/biosecurity programmes.

The current year deficit of \$24,066 reflects the realignment of revenue with delivery of our core deliverables of education, weeding, pest surveillance/dog, and monitoring. The operational deficit was significantly reduced by the gifting of the Mazda ute from the Kororāreka Freemasons Lodge.

Despite the operational deficit, the financial position of the Guardians has remained stable due to the prudent financial management of the both the Committee and the Operations team. Maintenance of a Guardians Reserve balance equivalent to 4 months' core operating costs and the short term investment of surplus cash demonstrates the Committee's conservative approach in support of Project Island Song as a sound going concern.

FY 23/24: 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024
FY 24/25: 1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025
FY 25/26: 1 July 2025 – 30 June 2026
At the time of printing, the above figures are unaudited.



Related to fundraising	\$29,274	6.3%
Related to volunteers	\$15,161	3.3%
Costs of providing commercial activities	\$11,032	2.4%
Transportation	\$29,410	6.4%
Related to service delivery	\$377,839	81.6%



Grants	\$337,189	76.9%
Donations, koha, bequests & fundraising	\$63,827	14.5%
Fees and subscriptions from members	\$4,797	1.1%
Revenue from commercial activities	\$26,775	6.1%
Interest income	\$6,061	1.4%

Deficit	\$24,066
Assets	\$433,819
Bank accounts and cash	\$190,592
Other current assets	\$34,027
Property, plant & equipment	\$204,590
Other non-current assets	\$4,610
Liabilities	\$101,484
Unused tagged grants and donations	\$67,199
Other liabilities	\$34,284
Net Assets	\$332,335



Weedbusters at work, Army Bay, Moturua, winter 2025.

Tō tātou ekenga ki mua hāi Our future

As we look to the future we have clear strategic goals for the coming year. These goals are significant to ensure the enduring success of the mahi that has taken place over the previous couple of decades. We look forward to the opportunity to work with our volunteers, supporters and other organisations to enable the achievement of these goals:

Strategic Outcome #1 Viable enterprise

Diverse revenue streams are enabled to allow for a sustainable future.

- Through our annual calendar sales and other fundraising initiatives

We have good business practices, are accountable to ensure operational excellence. The health, safety and wellbeing of our committee, contractors and volunteers is paramount in how we work.

Strategic Outcome #2 Excellence in wildlife conservation

The islands remain pest-free.

- Through regular conservation dog surveillance;
- Through regular island hardware surveillance.

Reintroductions of native wildlife are enabled.

- Through actioning outcomes from the Ecological Restoration Plan;
- Through regular monitoring of species (flora & fauna) on the islands.

Strategic Outcome #3 Resilient partnerships

We engage with our partners, supporters, landowners, funders and volunteers on a regular basis.

- Through regular communication about mahi taking place;
- Through sharing challenges and successes with the Project partners.

Strategic Outcome #4 Destination Project Island Song

The education programme continues to grow, extending our reach from children and teens to adults.

- Through a guided walk option for the islands;
- Through extension of our current education programme.

Above: Toutouwai | North Island robin on Moturua.

Ngā mihi ki ngā Kaitautoko Thanks & acknowledgements

We'd like to thank our generous members who, year after year, support the organisation through their annual membership.

We'd like to acknowledge our 2024-2025 Business Members:



Donors and funders

Project Island Song is reliant on funders and sponsors to keep us on the path to achieving our vision. Thank you to all those who have contributed towards Project Island Song in various ways, including the provision of transport for volunteers going to the Islands, funding project work, providing equipment for use on weeding and planting days and much more.



In-kind supporters



Calendar vendors

That Coffee Bloke, Te Haumi	Russell Museum, Te Whare Taonga o Kororāreka	Long Beach Coffee Cart	The Junction Café	Russell Mini Tours	Orongo Bay Holiday Park
Pompallier Mission House & Printery	Russell 4Square	Pipsqueak, Kerikeri	Opua General Store	Blue River Orchard	Redwoods Garden Centre
		Bay of Islands isite	Russell Bookshop	Unichem, Kerikeri	

If you've seen a pest on the islands, please call
0800 362 468 immediately, and also email us at
pest@projectislandsong.co.nz

Project Island Song is a unique partnership between community group the Guardians of the Bay of Islands, Te Rawhiti hapū (Ngāti Kuta and Patukeha) and the Department of Conservation.

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P.O. Box 142, Russell 0242

To find out more about our work, volunteer with us, or be part of the project in another way, please visit our website:
projectislandsong.co.nz

Follow the Project Island Song story on social media:

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 [/projectislandsong](https://www.youtube.com/projectislandsong)



Caring for the environment is vitally important to Project Island Song, which is why this document is printed using environmentally friendly, dry toners on responsibly sourced paper.

